

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4923

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 THE HAGUE 6139

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, NL

SUBJ: NETHERLANDS AND NUCLEAR ENERGY

REF: HAGUE 5881

1. SUMMARY: THE STRONG ELEMENT OF DISTRUST AND OPPOSITION
WITHIN DUTCH PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD MILITARY USES OF NUCLEAR
POWER (HAGUE 5881) HOLDS TRUE ALSO TO A LARGE EXTENT FOR
CIVILIAN USES, WITH FORESEEABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE US ON ENERGY
PROGRAMS, COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND ANY MULTI-
LATERAL EFFORT UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY (IEA)
TO BOOST NUCLEAR POWER FACILITIES IN MEMBER COUNTRIES. THIS

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AVERSION TO NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES OF ANY KIND IS A TYPICALLY

DUTCH PHENOMENON THAT CUTS A WIDE SWATH THROUGH DUTCH SOCIETY, THOUGH MORE PREDOMINANTLY WITHIN THE LEFT. THIS NUCLEAR NEGATIVISM IS BASED ON BOTH ENVIRONMENTAL GROUNDS AND ON A PECULIARLY DUTCH FEELING THAT NUCLEAR POWER IS SOMEHOW IMMORAL. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE OUTCOME OF THE PARLIAMENTARY VOTE LATE IN 1975 ON CONSTRUCTION OF THREE NEW NUCLEAR STATIONS IS BY NO MEANS CERTAIN. A NEGATIVE VOTE COULD (A) MAKE THE NETHERLANDS MORE DEPENDENT ON IMPORTED ENERGY SOURCES AND THEREFORE MORE VULNERABLE TO OPEC PRESSURES, (B) LEAD THE DUTCH TO DIVERT GAS FROM EXPORTS TO DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION, THUS WEAKENING NETHERLANDS' FAVORABLE EXTERNAL POSITION, (C) CREATE AN EXAMPLE WHICH OPPONENTS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY IN US AND ELSEWHERE COULD USE, AND (D) CAUSE US NUCLEAR INDUSTRY TO LOSE POTENTIAL SALES. THERE COULD ALSO BE AN ADVERSE SPIN-OFF IN THE MILITARY FIELD AND ON DUTCH PARTICIPATION IN MULTILATERAL PROJECTS SUCH AS FAST BREEDER REACTOR DEVELOPMENT.

2. THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES AS WELL AS HAZARDS FOR US INTERESTS IN THIS COMPLEX SITUATION. AS A FIRST STEP WE NEED POLICY GUIDANCE RE POSSIBLE EMBASSY INITIATIVES TO OVERCOME THIS NUCLEAR NEUROSIS. IN OTHER WORDS, DOES THE US WANT THE NETHERLANDS TO PULL ITS WEIGHT IN THE NUCLEAR ENERGY FIELD? IF THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS YES, A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS SUGGEST THEMSELVES WHICH ARE ENUMERATED IN THE RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE END OF THIS MESSAGE. END SUMMARY.

NETHERLANDS NUCLEAR NEUROSIS

3. THE AVERSION TO NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES OF ANY KIND IS A TYPICALLY DUTCH PHENOMENON THAT CUTS A WIDE SWATH THROUGH DUTCH SOCIETY THOUGH MORE PREDOMINANTLY WITHIN THE LEFT. THESE FEELINGS ARE BASED PARTLY ON ENVIRONMENTAL GROUNDS SEEMINGLY SUBSTANTIATED BY RECENT US SHUTDOENS OF ATOMIC POWER-PLANTS FOR PRECAUTIONARY INSPECTIONS. THIS ALONE WOULD GIVE THEM POTENCY IN THIS EXTREMELY COMPACT COUNTRY, STRUGGLING DOGGEDLY TO PRESERVE ITS REMAINING GREEN SPACE AND CORRECT THE DAMAGES OF AN ADVANCED DEGREE OF AIR, WATER AND NOISE POLLUTION. ON TOP OF THIS, MANY DUTCH HARBOR AN ALMOST INSTINCTIVE FEELING THAT NUCLEAR POWER IS NOT ONLY POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS

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BUT SOMEHOW IMMORAL. ADDITIONAL ANTI-NUCLEAR FEELING STEMS FROM THOSE DUTCH WHO OPPOSE ANY ACTIVITY WHICH SMACKS OF "SUPER POWER" INHUMANITY OR INDIFFERENCE.

THE GLACIAL PROGRESS OF DUTCH NUCLEAR ENERGY

4. NUCLEAR POWER HAS BEEN STANDING IN THE WINGS HERE A LONG TIME. THE FORECAST IN 1957 WHITE PAPER THAT ATOM WOULD QUICKLY

PROVIDE 30 PERCENT OF NETHERLANDS' ENERGY CAPACITY WAS OVERTAKEN BY SIGNIFICANT FINDS OF DUTCH NATURAL GAS JUST TWO YEARS LATER AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT AND HEAVY RELIANCE ON SLOCHTEREN GAS FIELD. MEANWHILE ATOMIC POWER LIMPED ALONG, WITH COMMISSIONING OF 54 MW EXPERIMENTAL STATION AT DODEWAARD IN 1959 AND FIRST MAJOR NUCLEAR PLANT OF 450 MW AT BORSELLE IN 1973. TODAY LESS THAN FIVE PERCENT OF ENERGY CAPACITY CONSISTS OF NUCLEAR GENERATORS.

5. SO LONG AS OIL WAS CHEAP AND UNCOMPLICATED, DUTCH COULD LOOK WITH EQUANIMITY ON DEPLETION OF NATURAL GAS AND GLACIAL INCREASE IN NUCLEAR PLANTS. BUT ARAB EMBARGO IN 1973 AND OPEC PRICE BOOSTS JOLTED DUTCH OUT OF THEIR COMPLACENCY. GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO NEW SITUATION WAS SET FORTH IN ENERGY WHITE PAPER PRESENTED SEPTEMBER 26 (HAGUE 4794). THIS CALLED AMONG OTHER THINGS FOR EXPANSION OF NUCLEAR POWER TO ABOUT 20 PERCENT OF GENERATING CAPACITY BY 1985, TO BE ACHIEVED BY CONSTRUCTION OF THREE 1,000 MEGAWATT PLANTS, BRINGING TOTAL TO 3,500. MW.

6. IT MIGHT SEEM THAT NUCLEAR POWER'S TIME HAS FINALLY ARRIVED. BUT HAS IT? EC COMMISSION IN REPORT EARLIER THIS YEAR ESTIMATED THAT DUTCH REQUIREMENTS BY 1985 WERE FOR EIGHT NEW NUCLEAR PLANTS NOT THREE, AND FOR CAPACITY OF 8,500 MW. IN ITS WHITE PAPER, DUTCH GOVERNMENT TOOK NOTE OF COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATION FOR MAXIMUM EFFORT REGARDING ATOMIC ENERGY, BUT CITED PUBLIC UNCERTAINTY ABOUT ACCEPTABILITY OF ATOMIC POWER IN EXPLAINING THAT IT WAS ADOPTING A CAUTIOUS APPROACH. "THIS UNCERTAINTY CANNOT BE BROUGHT TO AN END BY REFERENCE TO TECHNOLOGICAL ARGUMENT...(BUT) ONLY BY KNOWLEDGE...(AND) CONVICTION; THIS CONVICTION CAN...GROW IN PRACTICE. THIS IMPOSES LIMITS ON THE SPEED OF EXPANDING ATOMIC ENERGY. POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY IS REQUIRED."

DOUBTS IN PUBLIC AND (FOR CABINET) IN PRIVATE

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7. WHETHER WHITE PAPER REFLECTED TIMIDITY ONLY OF PUBLIC OR ALSO OF CABINET BECAME CLEARER FEW DAYS AFTER ITS PUBLICATION (HAGUE 4917). IN EMBARRASSING EPISODE, PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL WAS REVEALED TO HAVE SENT LETTERS TO TWO PROMINENT MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY, SICCO MANSCHOLT, FORMER EC COMMISSIONER, AND MR. A.H. KLOOS, FORMER TRADE UNION CHIEF NOW DIRECTOR OF SOCIALIST TV-RADIO ORGANIZATION, INFORMING THEM THAT CONSTRUCTION OF THREE NEW NUCLEAR STATIONS WOULD NOT START BEFORE 1979, THREE YEARS LATER THAN CALLED FOR IN WHITE PAPER. FACT THAT DEN UYL WROTE LETTERS REVEALED HIS SENSITIVITY TO STRENGTH OF ELEMENTS OPPOSED TO NUCLEAR POWER. EPISODE INDICATED THAT WHITE PAPER WAS A COMPROMISE. CONSTRUCTION OF NUCLEAR PLANTS WAS TO GO AHEAD BUT AT SLOWER RATE THAN EC COMMISSION ASKED. IN ADDITIONAL BOW TO OPPONENTS, MINISTER

OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS LUBBERS AGREED THAT BEFORE ASKING PARLIAMENT TO GIVE ITS APPROVAL, GOVERNMENT WOULD UNDERTAKE STUDIES ON ENVIRONMENTAL, SAFETY, AND OTHER ASPECTS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY.

8. PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON WHITE PAPER OCT 21 SHOWED THAT HESITATION TOWARD NUCLEAR ENERGY WAS NEITHER LIMITED TO CABINET NOR BASED ON MISINTERPRETATION OF PUBLIC MOOD. MAJORITY COMPRISING FULL POLITICAL SPECTRUM OF SECOND CHAMBER VOICED DOUBTS, MORE OF LESS INSISTING THAT BOTH ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES BE GIVEN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION BEFORE DECISIONS ARE TAKEN.

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LIMDIS

9. STUDIES PROMISED BY GOVERNMENT ARE NOW UNDER WAY.
MINISTER LUBBERS ENTRUSTED RISK ANALYSIS TO ASSOCIATION OF

ELECTRICITY PRODUCERS (SEP). MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT VORRINK ASKED NATIONAL HEALTH COUNCIL FOR ADVICE RELATING TO DANGERS TO PUBLIC WEAL. MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS BOERSMA COMMISSIONED COMMITTEE FOR REACTOR SAFETY TO EXPLORE SAFETY ASPECTS OF FISSION-MATERIAL CYCLE. RESULTS OF STUDIES, WHICH OVERLAP TO SOME EXTENT, ARE TO BE SUBMITTED TO PARLIAMENT IN JUNE, 1975.

10. IF ALL GOES WELL, CONSTRUCTION ON FIRST NEW NUCLEAR STATION COULD BEGIN IN 1976. BUILDING OF OTHER TWO WILL BE STAGGERED, WITH LAST SCHEDULED FOR COMPLETION IN 1985.

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A CURIOUS WAY TO FINANCE PROTEST

11. OPPOSITION TO NUCLEAR ENERGY STATIONS HAS BEEN MATCHED ON ANOTHER FRONT BY DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST DUTCH PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT BY BENELUX COUNTRIES AND GERMANY OF PROTOTYPE 300 MW SODIUM-COOLED FAST BREEDER REACTOR AT KALKAR, GERMANY, NEAR DUTCH BORDER. IN WHAT MUST BE PAINFULLY REGRETTED DECISION, WHEN GOVERNMENT UNDERTOOK IN 1972 TO FINANCE DUTCH SHARE IT DID SO THROUGH CONTINUING LEVY ON CONSUMER ENERGY BILLS, CHARGING EACH MONTH THREE PERCENT OF TOTAL, IDENTIFIED AS CONTRIBUTION FOR KALKAR. METHOD HAS BEEN PERFECT VEHICLE FOR PROTEST. SOME 2,200 PEOPLE WHO OPPOSE KALKAR HAVE RISKED FINES AND HAD POWER CUT OFF BECAUSE OF THEIR WELL PUBLICIZED REFUSAL TO PAY NOT ENERGY BILL BUT ONLY LEVY. IN SEPTEMBER, BUSES CARRIED ABOUT 5,000 DEMONSTRATORS INTO GERMANY. IN OCTOBER, DURING SECOND CHAMBER DEBATE ON ENERGY WHITE PAPER, OPPONENTS OF KALKAR PROJECT DELIVERED TO CHAMBER LEADERS PETITIONS WITH 155,000 SIGNATURES. DESPITE THESE OBJECTIONS, MAJORITY OF SECOND CHAMBER VOTED DECEMBER 16 TO REJECT MOTION BY LEFT-WING PARTIES AGAINST FURTHER DUTCH COOPERATION IN KALKAR, THUS GIVING GO-AHEAD TO 1975 BUDGET FOR REACTOR DEVELOPMENT FUND. MINISTER LUBBERS HAD POINTED OUT THAT A MAXIMUM LIMIT HAD ALREADY BEEN FIXED FOR DUTCH CONTRIBUTION. THE PROPONENTS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY

11. LEST IT APPEAR THAT OPINION IN NETHERLANDS IS DOMINATED BY OPPONENTS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY, IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT, ALTHOUGH HE CHOSE CAUTIOUS APPROACH, MINISTER LUBBERS FOR ONE APPEARS TO BE FIRM SUPPORTER OF NUCLEAR POWER. DURING SECOND CHAMBER DEBATE HE WARNED THAT HOLLAND COULD NOT STOP DEVELOPMENTS TAKING PLACE IN NUCLEAR FIELD, AND THAT IF SUGGESTIONS WERE FOLLOWED FOR FIVE-YEAR MORATORIUM ON NUCLEAR PLANT CONSTRUCTION SUCH ENFORCED "HIBERNATION" WOULD CARRY RISK OF HAVING TO MAKE UP AN EVEN BIGGER BACKLOG AT END OF PERIOD.

12. THERE IS IN FACT STRONG IMPLICATION IN LUBBERS' WORDS THAT

HIS CAUTION IS A TACTIC TO DISARM DOUBTERS. WHILE AGREEING TO STUDIES AS PRECONDITION TO PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL FOR NUCLEAR PLANT CONSTRUCTION, HE MADE SURE THEY FOCUSED ON EXISTING PLAN FOR EACH NEW STATION IN EACH OF PLANNED GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS,
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RATHER THAN ALLOWING STUDIES TO BE OF GENERAL NATURE OF EARLIER ONES. HE MADE PUBLIC AS WELL HIS DOUBTS THAT RESULTS WOULD BE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN.

13. IF GOVERNMENT HAS DRAGGED ITS FEET, ELECTRICITY PRODUCERS HAVE NOT. FOR SEVERAL YEARS SEP, DUTCH POWER INDUSTRY'S ELECTRICITY PLANNING ORGANIZATION, HAS CALLED FOR CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL NUCLEAR PLANTS. INDUSTRY EXPERTS NOW BELIEVE THAT IN SPITE OF OPPOSITION, PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL FOR FIRST NEW PLANT WILL BE GIVEN IN FALL OF 1975 FOLLOWING SUBMISSION OF STUDIES, AN IMPACT STATEMENT, AND FINAL CABINET RECOMMENDATION. UNCERTAINTY ON OUTCOME, CERTAINTY ON CONSEQUENCES

14. WE THINK FINAL VOTE IN PARLIAMENT WILL BE CLOSER THAN EXPERTS BELIEVE. DISCUSSION OF HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT IN SECOND CHAMBER DEBATE FREQUENTLY TOOK ON CHARACTER OF DEFENSE AGAINST ANY FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR ENERGY, WITH POLITICAL REASONING TAKING PRECEDENCE OVER RATIONAL ARGUMENT. MINDS OF MANY OF THESE SPEAKERS ARE CLOSED, AND WILL NOT BE INFLUENCED BY RESULTS OF STUDIES. THERE ARE OTHERS, HOWEVER, WHO GENUINELY WANT ONE LAST LOOK AT ALL THE RISKS BEFORE MAKING UP THEIR MINDS. WHETHER THERE ARE ENOUGH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN LATTER CATEGORY TO BE DECISIVE IS QUESTION TO WHICH WE DO NOT KNOW ANSWER. POINT WE WISH TO STRESS, HOWEVER, IS THAT OUTCOME OF NUCLEAR ENERGY DEBATE IN NETHERLANDS IS UNCERTAIN.

15. WHAT WOULD BE CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE DUTCH VOTE? WE FORESEE FOLLOWING:

A) NETHERLANDS WOULD BECOME MORE DEPENDENT ON IMPORTED ENERGY AND THEREFORE BE EASIER PREY TO PRESSURE FROM OIL PRODUCING STATES.

B) IF DUTCH DIVERTED PRODUCTION OF NATURAL GAS FROM EXPORT TO DOMESTIC PURPOSES, COUNTRIES (SUCH AS GERMANY, FRANCE, BELGIUM AND ITALY) WHICH BUY DUTCH GAS WOULD SUFFER.

C) DIVERSION OF GAS TO DOMESTIC USE WOULD AFFECT NETHERLANDS' EXTERNAL POSITION, WHICH CURRENTLY DERIVES MUCH OF ITS STRENGTH FROM FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS OF GAS EXPORTS.

D) OPPONENTS OF NUCLEAR ENERGY IN US AND ELSEWHERE WOULD HAVE AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW.

E) US NUCLEAR INDUSTRY WOULD LOSE POTENTIAL SALES.

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16. LESS CERTAIN IS PSYCHOLOGICAL SPIN-OFF OF NEGATIVE VOTE ON NUCLEAR ENERGY STATIONS. IT MIGHT STRENGTHEN OPPONENTS OF NETHERLANDS' ROLE IN NUCLEAR DEFENSE. IT COULD ALSO LEAD TO WITHDRAWAL OF DUTCH FROM PARTICIPATION IN MULTILATERAL PROJECTS SUCH AS KALKAR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES AS WELL AS HAZARDS FOR US INTERESTS IN THIS COMPLEX SITUATION. AS A FIRST STEP WE NEED POLICY GUIDANCE RE POSSIBLE EMBASSY INITIATIVES TO OVERCOME DUTCH NUCLEAR NEUROSIS. IN OTHER WORDS, DOES THE US WANT THE NETHERLANDS TO PULL ITS WEIGHT IN THE NUCLEAR ENERGY FIELD? IF THE ANSWER IS YES, THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS:

- A) THAT THE EMBASSY BE AUTHORIZED TO INFORM SENIOR DUTCH OFFICIALS DISCREETLY OF POSITIVE US POLICY TOWARD A SUBSTANTIAL DUTCH NUCLEAR ENERGY PROGRAM FOR CIVILIAN USES;
- B) THAT THOUGHT BE GIVEN TO VISITS BY HIGH LEVEL AEC OFFICIALS TO SUPPLEMENT AND FORTIFY THE EMBASSY'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A MORE POSITIVE APPROACH BY THE GON TO NUCLEAR ENERGY;
- C) THAT DUTCH OFFICIALS SUCH AS MINISTER OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS LUBBERS AND OPINION MOLDERS IN PARLIAMENT AND THE MEDIA BE INVITED TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES FOR FIRST-HAND DISCUSSIONS RE US POLICY AND PROGRAM;
- D) THAT, WITH THE CONCURRENCE OF THE GON, US PRIVATE INDUSTRY BE INVITED OR ENCOURAGED TO MOUNT A PROGRAM IN THE NETHERLANDS;
- E) THAT, IF IT IS THE US INTENTION TO USE THE IEA AS A VEHICLE TO PROMOTE EXPANSION OF NUCLEAR POWER CAPACITY IN MEMBER STATES, THE CONTACTS SUGGESTED ABOVE BE UTILIZED TO PREPARE THE GON TO ADOPT A CONSTRUCTIVE STANCE RE NUCLEAR POWER AS AN ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF ENERGY IN THE IEA;
- F) THAT, IF THE DEPARTMENT FAVORS AN ACTIVE NUCLEAR POLICY FOR THE NETHERLANDS, THE EMBASSY TRY UNOBTRUSIVELY TO PERSUADE LEADING FIGURES IN GOVERNMENT, PARLIAMENT AND INDUSTRY TO WEIGH WHAT WE SEE AS ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF A NEGATIVE PARLIAMENTARY VOTE IN 1975; AND
- G) THAT, TO COUNTER THE EFFECT OF MISLEADING ARTICLES IN THE DUTCH PRESS AND IN RADIO/TV, DEPARTMENT SHOULD PROVIDE EMBASSY ON A CONTINUING BASIS WITH TIMELY INFORMATION ON IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS IN NUCLEAR ENERGY FOR DISSIMINATION TO INFLUENTIAL PERSONS IN GOVERNMENT, PARLIAMENT, THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND THE MEDIA.

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18. WE WELCOME ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS WASHINGTON MIGHT HAVE TO INFLUENCE THE DUTCH ATTITUDE IN THE DIRECTION DESIRED BY THE US.
TANGUY

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